



**Testimony Supporting Section 1 of H.B. 5169: An Act Implementing the Recommendations
of the Office of Early Childhood**

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Education Committee

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Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Lavielle, and esteemed members of the Education Committee:

My name is Nicole Updegrove, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in **support of Section 1 of H.B. 18-5169, which would provide a 90-day immunization waiver for homeless children to attend child care while giving their parents time to attain appropriate documentation.**

For a low-income parent, being pregnant or having a young child is associated with heightened risk of seeking or entering a homeless shelter.¹ Connecticut's most recent point-in-time count identified 1,180 individuals in 392 families experiencing homelessness.² National trends show that among homeless children, nearly half are under age six.³ Access to high quality early care and education is extremely important for all children, but especially for young children in vulnerable circumstances. Homelessness in itself is disruptive and traumatic to children, and leaves children vulnerable to further traumas including assault or abrupt separation from caregivers.⁴

Enrollment in child care programs and preschool can provide stability and support for children and allow parents to search for jobs, work or participate in job training, and search for permanent housing. However, families seeking child care often face barriers to accessing care, including high mobility, lack of transportation, and lack of documentation.⁵ Removing barriers to supportive services is necessary for the wellbeing of children and their parents as well as an important step to strengthening Connecticut's workforce.

In recognition of the importance of child care for homeless families, reauthorization of the federal Child Care Development Block Grant in 2014 required that states develop strategies to facilitate homeless families' access to state-subsidized child care in a number of ways. Among these requirements, states must establish a grace period to allow homeless children to receive subsidized child care while their families reach compliance with immunization requirements.⁶ **This provision of H.B. 18-5169 is in accordance with federal law and with our state Child Care Development Fund implementation plan.⁷ It will help homeless families access child care that is critical to keeping vulnerable children safe and lowering barriers to parents' employment.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the provision of House Bill 5169 related to homeless families. I can be reached with any questions at nupdegrove@ctvoices.org or at 203-498-4240, ext. 107.

¹ Shinn M, Greer AL, Bainbridge J, Kwon J, Zuiderveen S. (2013). "Efficient targeting of homelessness prevention services for families." *American Journal of Public Health*. 103 (Suppl 2), S324-S330. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301468.

² Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. (2017, May). "Connecticut Counts: Report on Homelessness in Connecticut." Retrieved from: <http://ceeh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CT-Counts-2017.pdf>.

³ Child Trends. (2015, October). "Homeless Children and Youth: Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being." Retrieved from: https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/112_Homeless_Children_and_Youth.pdf.

⁴ Bassuk E and Friedman S. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Homelessness and Extreme Poverty Working Group. (2005). "Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children." Retrieved from: http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/promising_practices/Facts_on_Trauma_and_Homeless_Children.pdf.

⁵ National Center for Homeless Education. (2013). "Early Care and Education for Children Experiencing Homelessness." Retrieved from: <https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/briefs/early-childhood.pdf>.

⁶ D.H.H.S. Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care. (2016, Dec. 14). "Child Care Development Fund Final Rule Frequently Asked Questions." Retrieved from: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-final-rule-faq>.

⁷ Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. (2016, June 27). "Connecticut Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan with Conditional Approval Letter for FY 2016-2018." Retrieved from: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/connecticut_stplan_pdf_2016.pdf.